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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [EG](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN MOD ON BORDER GUARD FORCE AT RAFAH

REF: A. CAIRO 2172  
[1](#)B. TEL AVIV 2151

Classified By: Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone. Reasons:  
1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Major General Mohamad Said El Assar (Advisor for Policy to Defmin Field Marshal Tantawi) called Ambassador July 17, and again on July 19, to request that the USG press the Israelis to engage directly with the MOD, through Egyptian-Israeli military liaison channels, regarding the number of Border Guard Force (BGF) troops allowed on the Egypt-Gaza border. He complained that the Israelis had told their Egyptian counterparts at the July 11 Joint Military Coordination Committee meeting at MFO's North Camp that they had no authority to discuss an increase of BGF troops in "Zone C," and that any such Israeli decision would have to be discussed at a political level. Assar told the Ambassador that if the Israeli side would come back to them on this issue, they would find the Egyptians "flexible and cooperative."

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador told Assar that we have been in close touch with the Israelis on this issue and they have made clear that they remain committed to the 2005 November agreement to permit a full 750 contingent in Zone C opposite Gaza at any time, but that they were unwilling to re-open that agreement to permit greater numbers. The Israelis had noted that, contrary to the 2005 agreement, Egyptian Central Security Forces had remained on station at Rafah along with the BGF, but they were not contesting this. The Israeli concern, which we shared and we presumed the GOE shares, was on effectiveness in stopping smuggling, not on the number of men required to do this. The U.S. has supported the concept of maximizing the number of BGF actively on station at Rafah. With the BGF battalion Headquarters and support base at al-Arish (Zone B) only a 45 minute drive away, we presumed the Egyptians should be able to generate more than 250 men on station, as at present. (Note: Post understands the Egyptians have not deployed up to the full 4000 BGF troops allowed in Zone B per the GOI-GOE agreements).

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador also informed Assar that the Israelis had offered to coordinate directly between their own and Egyptian civilian police and security agencies besides the existing EGIS channel. Assar rejected the notion outright: "LAWIO will be our only channel."  
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